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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 TEGUCIGALPA 000824

SIPDIS

STATE FOR TFIZ, IO, PM, S/CT, S/WCI, DRL, NP, AND L
STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CEN, WHA/CCA, WHA/USOAS, AND WHA/PPC

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [AORC](#) [KTIA](#) [KAWC](#) [IZ](#) [HO](#) [KICC](#)

SUBJECT: TFIZ01: AMBASSADOR URGES HONDURAN FM PEREZ-CADALSO
TO MAKE STRONGER PUBLIC STATEMENTS SUPPORTING U.S. ON IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 82391

[1B](#). OLSEN/KELLY E-MAIL 04/01/03

[1C](#). STATE 81638

[1D](#). TEGUCIGALPA 789

[1E](#). KELLY/PALMER E-MAIL 03/21/03

[1F](#). 02 TEGUCIGALPA 3318

Classified By: Ambassador Larry Palmer; Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (S) Summary. Ambassador met April 1 with Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs Guillermo Perez-Cadalso to discuss a wide range of issues, with a focus on Iraq and combating terrorism. Ambassador urged the GOH to make stronger public statements on Iraq, including on Iraqi war crimes, and criticized the recent statement by the Honduran UN PermRep as "empty." Perez-Cadalso said that the GOH would definitely provide troops to support the U.S. in post-war Iraq, and pledged to work with the Ministry of Defense to get a formal letter offering support to the USG. Ambassador pressed the FM on the need to ratify the ICC Article 98 Agreement with the U.S., sign/ratify five outstanding UN and two OAS counterterrorism conventions/protocols, and support the USG candidacy for the UNESCO Executive Board. The FM pledged that the GOH would support the final draft of the UNCHR resolution on Cuba, reiterated the GOH's desire for an 18-month extension of TPS, and noted the tougher language in the 2002 Human Rights Report on extrajudicial killings and corruption in Honduras. End Summary.

[12](#). (U) Ambassador and PolOff met April 1 with Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs Guillermo Perez-Cadalso Arias at the MFA to discuss Iraq and other key issues. The meeting followed the Ambassador's March 28 meeting with Honduran President Ricardo Maduro (septel).

Iraq: GOH Needs to be Publicly Supportive

[13](#). (C) Ambassador thanked FM Perez-Cadalso for the GOH's support for the U.S. as a member of the Coalition of the Willing on Iraq. The Foreign Minister said that he was the highest ranking representative of foreign governments in attendance at a recent briefing at the State Department for representatives of the coalition, during his recent trip to Washington (ref E). Ambassador told the FM that the USG was not happy with Honduran UN PermRep Manuel Acosta Bonilla's statement during the March 26 United Nations Security Council open debate on Iraq. It was a weak and empty statement that did not show support for the USG position on Iraq, said the Ambassador. Ambassador emphasized that he had already discussed with President Maduro March 28 the USG's disappointment with the statement (septel). Ambassador told FM Perez-Cadalso that the USG needed stronger support from coalition partners, and urged the GOH to speak out publicly in support of U.S. policy on Iraq. Perez-Cadalso made it clear that he had gotten the message, but he neither criticized the PermRep nor pledged to make a more forceful public statement on Iraq.

[14](#). (C) Ambassador reiterated that the USG was watching closely Honduran statements, or lack thereof, on Iraq. The comparison with El Salvador, which has made repeated public statements of support on U.S. Iraq policy, already offered troops in a post-war Iraq, and has ratified virtually all counterterrorism conventions, was not favorable to Honduras. Ambassador said he understood that the war was a potentially difficult issue for the GOH, but emphasized that the neutral UN statement by the Honduran PermRep was seen by the USG as a lost opportunity for the GOH to publicly support U.S. policy on Iraq.

Iraqi War Crimes - FM Asks for Written Material

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[15](#). (SBU) Ambassador delivered ref C demarche on Iraqi war crimes, which PolOff had delivered March 31 to MFA DG for Foreign Policy AMB Mario Fortin. The FM asked for a brief written report from the U.S. detailing the points raised by the Ambassador. Perez-Cadalso said that the GOH needed this before making any statement to the press. Ambassador said that the Embassy would request it from the Department. Post

has since asked WHA/CEN to find out when the "public diplomacy package" on this issue mentioned in the cable will be ready to give to Posts to release to host governments and the press, and if there was anything in the meantime that the Department can provide posts for use as a non-paper or fact sheet to the GOH, preferably in Spanish (ref B).

Honduras Will Offer Troops for Post-War Iraq

16. (S) Ambassador raised the issue of possible GOH participation in post-war "phase IV" operations in Iraq, saying that both President Maduro (septel) and Minister of Defense Fred Breve had previously given the Embassy indications of support. Ambassador emphasized that the USG needed a formal written offer of support from the GOH detailing the kind of assistance the GOH was prepared to provide. Perez-Cadalso said that the answer was yes, the GOH would provide troops, and that he would talk with MOD Breve and work on getting a formal offer of support to the USG.

ICC Article 98 Agreement: Congress a Potential Problem

17. (C) When asked about the status of ratifying the ICC Article 98 Agreement between the U.S. and Honduras, Perez-Cadalso confirmed that it had not yet been sent to congress for approval. The FM said it was a difficult time, given the ongoing war in Iraq, for the GOH to seek congressional approval of this controversial agreement. Ambassador underlined that the USG would remember favorably countries that stood by the U.S. during the war in Iraq, and noted that this support might include taking tough steps such as this. Perez-Cadalso asked Ambassador for USG assistance to urge Congress, especially the opposition Liberal Party, to support approval of the agreement. Ambassador said that the Embassy would be happy to talk to congressional leaders about the importance of approving the agreement. (Note: The Liberal Party is opposed to U.S. policy on Iraq. Perez-Cadalso evidently believes that this may fuel potential Liberal Party opposition to an ICC Article 98 Agreement. Post notes that the GOH had months since the September 19, 2002 signing of the agreement in which the GOH could have introduced the agreement to congress for approval prior to the start of the war in Iraq. End Note.)

Honduras Moving Slowly on Counterterrorism Conventions

18. (SBU) Ambassador gave the FM a Spanish-language copy of the IAEA's 1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials (which WHA/CEN had obtained with the assistance of NP/NE and U.S. Mission Vienna). PolOff told the FM that the Embassy hoped to soon have Spanish-language texts of the two ICAO and two IMO counterterrorism (CT) conventions/protocols also outstanding. (In fact, with the assistance of IO and Embassy London, WHA/CEN obtained copies of the two IMO CT conventions/protocols which Post sent to the FM April 2. Post now only needs the two ICAO conventions/protocols, with the assistance of ConGen Montreal.) This was in addition to the Spanish-language texts of the two OAS CT conventions (obtained by WHA/CEN with the help of WHA/USOAS and delivered to the FM during WHA DAS Fisk's February 6 meeting with him.) which the FM claimed would soon be sent to congress for approval. Ambassador made clear the USG's desire that Honduras sign and/or ratify all seven outstanding CT conventions as quickly as possible. The FM told Ambassador that the CT conventions would not be controversial in Congress, but blamed the Casa Presidencial for some of the delay in forwarding the CT conventions to congress. (Note: The DCM has raised the issue of the CT conventions/protocols with Minister of the Presidency Luis Cosenza in a March 12 meeting and a March 28 letter. End Note.)

GOH Will Support Final Draft of UNCHR Resolution on Cuba

19. (C) In response to Ambassador's request for the GOH to co-sponsor the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) resolution on Cuba (as it had done in 2002), the FM said that his understanding was that the Peruvian draft resolution was still circulating for comments. Once the draft was finalized, Perez-Cadalso said that the GOH would support it. AMB Fortin told PolOff April 1 that the GOH had a copy of a draft resolution sponsored by Peru, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua.

UNESCO Executive Board - Noncommittal Response from FM

110. (U) Ambassador demarched FM on the upcoming re-entry of the U.S. into UNESCO, and urged the GOH to support the USG candidacy for the UNESCO Executive Board as requested in a dip note. Perez-Cadalso was noncommittal. PolOff, who had previously demarched AMB Fortin on the issue (ref D), called Fortin after the meeting to confirm that the scheduled date

for the election was October 10, 2003, in response to a question from the FM, who mentioned that the Honduran Ambassador in Geneva would be changing prior to October.

TPS - GOH Makes Another Plea for 18 Month Extension

¶11. (SBU) Ambassador gave Perez-Cadalso a copy of the letter from the Secretary to the FM on the Honduran request for an extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Hondurans, that thanked Perez-Cadalso for his March 18 letter and explained that a decision was pending (ref A). The FM reiterated that the GOH was seeking an 18-month extension of TPS. The Ambassador said that he would relay this request to Washington.

FM Notes Criticism in Human Rights Report

¶12. (SBU) Ambassador gave FM a copy of the final version of the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Honduras for 2002. PolOff had given an embargoed copy to AMB Fortin March 31, which the FM said he had skimmed that afternoon. Perez-Cadalso noted that the criticism on extrajudicial killings and corruption was somewhat tougher than the 2001 report, and said that the timing of the release of the report was difficult. He said that it was difficult for the GOH to be criticized by the USG at the same time it was supporting the U.S. on Iraq.

MFA Gets the Message on Iraq

¶13. (S) Comment. FM Perez-Cadalso understood Ambassador's direct message that the GOH, as a member of the coalition, needed to express its public support for U.S. policy on Iraq in a more forceful manner. His definitive answer that the GOH would provide troops in some capacity for post-war Iraq was positive, but his failure to pledge to make a more forceful public statement on Iraq was not. On most issues the MFA is a cautious institution, and Perez-Cadalso is often an embodiment of that caution. He has not taken any bold initiatives as Foreign Minister but has conscientiously carried out Maduro Administration foreign policies. It is important to note that he is not a member of the tight Maduro inner circle. (In fact, his removal has been the subject of ongoing speculation since December 2002.) Nevertheless, Post believes that Perez-Cadalso and President Maduro understand that as a member of the coalition on Iraq, the GOH needs to make bolder public statements. End Comment.

Palmer